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SANFORD

HISTORY OF THE
FIRST CHURCH...
RAYNHAM



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HISTORY

OF THE

FIRST CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN RAYNHAM.

THE
HISTORY

OF THE
FIRST CHURCH AND SOCIETY
IN RAYNHAM,

IN TWO DISCOURSES, DELIVERED JAN. 1, 1832.

**BEING LITTLE MORE THAN A CENTURY
SINCE THE CHURCH WAS CONSTITUTED.**

BY ENOCH SANFORD,
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

TAUNTON:
EDMUND ANTHONY—OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT GAZETTE.
.....
1832.

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SERMON I.

PSALM 78: 5.

FOR HE ESTABLISHED A TESTIMONY IN JACOB AND APPOINTED A LAW IN ISRAEL, WHICH HE COMMANDED OUR FATHERS THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE THEM KNOWN TO THEIR CHILDREN.

As it is our duty to maintain the institutions of religion not only for our own sakes but the benefit of posterity, we may receive a powerful motive to this duty by often considering at what expense and with what zeal these sacred institutions were maintained by our fathers.

It is the business of history to record the important events of an age for the instruction of succeeding ages. The wisdom and faithfulness of our fathers whose praise is in the churches, should not be forgotten by us who share so richly the fruits of their toils.

One hundred years since this town was incorporated, were completed the 5th, or by the new style the 16th of last April. (A) And it was a *hundred years* the 19th, that is, by the present style, the 30th of last October since the church connected with this society was organized. I have hence thought it proper to begin this new year by reviewing the history of the town and also of the church. Such a history, embracing the general and more important events of the century now closed, may be interesting and doubtless may be made profitable to us and our children.

No one is now living of the first members of the church or of the town:—all have many years since slept with their fathers. What remains of them is to be obtained only from public records and undoubted tradition.

This tract of country in which we now see so many busy and prosperous people, was not visited by civilized man till the year of our Lord 1621. During numerous ages the river had rolled its

waters ;—the towering forest had waved, and spread around an almost unbroken wilderness which never echoed to the sound of the mill, or the axe of the woodman, but all was possessed as the indisputed domain of the wild beast and the untutored savage. The sun and the golden seasons, which in other climes had caused the fields to wave with abundant harvests, had here rolled, for centuries, over a virgin soil. The whole country seemed a wild vacuum waiting to be filled with the labors of industry, the achievements of the arts, and the blessings of religion. But all this waste as to natural advantages was nothing compared with the waste of intellect. No traces were to be found that the Indian tribes during the many centuries they had possessed New England, had made any advance toward civilization, or any of the useful arts. Though naturally endowed with intellects equal to that of the white man, their fondness for savage life seemed invincible.

In July 1621, Edward Winslow and Stephen Hopkins were sent by the Governor of Plymouth to explore this part of the country, to visit Massasoit the king of the Wampannoags who resided principally at what is now called Bristol, to ascertain their strength, and open trade with them. Having passed Middleborough, then an Indian town called Namasket, they arrived at Titicut, where they exchanged hospitable offices with the natives, whom they found fishing. There they lodged one night in the open fields, the banks of the river on both sides being cleared and adapted to cultivation.

These ambassadors then proceeded six miles down the river, on the south side to a fording place near King's bridge, or the New Forge. When preparing to cross the river, they were opposed by two aged Indians on the opposite bank, who were the only individuals in this whole region that had survived the pestilence which two years before had nearly depopulated this section of the country. These two Indians, however, being assured that Winslow and Hopkins, with their Indian guides, were come in a friendly manner, no longer opposed their passage, but received them with kindness. These then were the first Englishmen who set foot on the soil of Raynham. Here they ascertained the ebb and flow of the tide. The weather being extremely warm, they quenched their thirst with the clear water of the springs which were numerous. Their Indian companions showed them much attention, carried them across the small streams on their backs, and assisted in transporting their baggage.

In passing along the southern border of this town by the river, they discovered many places which had once been inhabited by Indians. The ground near the river was cleared, but all around were signs of the ravages of the plague, which a little before had swept away the red inhabitants. The soil was rich and luxuriant, but silence and desolation pervaded the deserted region, which farther than the eye could reach was covered with huge forests of oak, walnut, beach, and gigantic chesnuts.*

Taunton, which at first included Raynham and five other neighboring towns, began to be settled in the year 1638-9, by emigrants principally from Taunton in England. The lands of Mrs. Elizabeth Pool one of the chief proprietors, were specially laid out by order of the Colonial Government at Plymouth in May 1639. She and other proprietors purchased their lands of the Indians.

In 1675, the proprietors set forth a declaration of their rightful possessions with the following preamble. "Whereas by the providence of God in the year 1638 and the year 1639, it pleased God to bring the most part of the first purchasers of Taunton over the great ocean, into this wilderness from our dear and native land, and after some small time here, we found this place, called by the natives of the land Cohannet, in the Colony of New Plymouth; and of the Court of said Colony we obtained grants of tracts of land for a plantation or township, as by the records of said Court, it may and doth appear, and then we also made purchase and bought the said tracts of land, for our money, of the right proprietors and owners, the Indian sachem or prince of this part of the country, as by deed under their hands it may appear; and in honor and love to our dear and native country, we called this place Taunton, and owing it a great mercy of God to bring us to this place, and setting us on lands of our own, bought with our money in peace, in the midsts of the heathen for a possession for ourselves and for our posterity after us."

Settlements began to be made in what is now Raynham as early as 1652. Then it was that James Leonard, Henry Leonard, and Ralph Russel, who came from Pontipod in Wales and settled first in Braintree, came here and erected extensive iron works on Two Mile River which were the first Iron works erected in North America. (B)

During the Indian war in 1675 which spread terror and des-

* See Baylies' Memoir of Plymouth Colony, Vol. 1.

olation through many of the towns of Plymouth and Massachusetts Colony, the inhabitants of Taunton and this place were mercifully preserved from savage invasion. Philip the great instigator of the whole war, who, by combining the Indian forces, had laid a plan for exterminating every English family was particularly friendly to the people of Taunton who had often shown him favor. He had often made Raynham his summer retreat. He therefore designed, it is said, to have destroyed all the other settlements in Plymouth colony, before he attacked this, and gave strict orders to his Indians to this effect. Frequent massacres of the white people and the burning of their houses were occurring in the neighboring towns. But here, though one house was garisoned, to which some of the inhabitants resorted, the dread chief who was properly called "terror of New England" never inflicted his ravages. (C)

These deliverances from savage invasion, which threatened and well nigh accomplished the extermination of the English settlement in this Colony, deserves to be remembered among the signal interpositions of Divine Providence in behalf of this country. (D)

We perceive from these sketches what was the character of those who first levelled the forests and tilled the soil in the places which we now occupy. Their object was enterprising and noble:—it was to maintain the truths and institutions of the christian religion. In pursuing this object, they could submit to hardships with fortitude, and were sustained by an unwavering reliance on Divine Providence. Their bodily strength was unimpaired by the poison of intoxicating liquor, for it was not used by them. A plain diet and unwearied industry, gave vigor to their animal spirits, and left their minds free for religious contemplation.

This town, when it was set off from Taunton into a distinct township by the General Court, was said to be "competently filled with inhabitants," though it contained then only about thirty families. Abraham Jones was a principal advocate for the separation, his name appearing first on the petition for that purpose. It does not appear, that party spirit, or any difference as to political or religious views produced this separation. But it arose principally from the local situation of the people. At that time parish and town limits were generally the same; and as most of the inhabitants here were too far from the meeting house in Taunton Village, to be able to attend public worship there conveniently, it was natural that their desire to be

formed into a separate parish, should dispose them to be set off into a separate town.

Few as were the inhabitants here, they thought themselves able to support the ministry of the gospel. This in their view was a great object to be secured; and the General Court incorporated them into a town with this proviso, "that the inhabitants of said town of Raynham, do within the space of three years, from the publication of this act procure and settle a *learned and orthodox* minister of good conversation, and make provision for his comfortable and honorable support; and likewise provide a school master to instruct their youth to read and write."

Anticipating the duty or rather the privilege of supporting public worship, they had erected a meeting house two or three years before the town was incorporated, though it was not entirely finished. The first town meeting for the choice of a board of selectmen and other town officers, was on the 22d of April 1731. On the tenth of May following they assembled in town, or which is the same thing, in parish meeting, and voted to pay all the expences which individuals had incurred in building the meeting house thus far, by levying a tax. At the same meeting they made choice of Mr. John Wales as their minister, who had been preaching to them about one year commencing March 16, 1729. They voted him his stated salary,* and voted also to finish the inside of the meeting house, by plastering it, erecting pews and laying the gallery floors.

Undertaking all these expences, would be considered, at this day, a heavy burden for so small a number of people. Their number was not only small, but many of them doubtless were in very limited circumstances. But they knew that the way to honorable prosperity, is to maintain virtue, and generously support an enlightened and pious ministry.

Mr. Wales accepted the call of the town to be their minister, and was ordained on the 20th of October 1731. The church was organized only the day before the ordination, and consisted of fifteen males and seventeen females who were dismissed from the first church in Taunton. It is probable that the same council who ordained Mr. Wales organized the church. Their not being organized sooner, accounts for their voting in

* His salary at first was £100 per annum, old tenor: and he received £200 settlement. His yearly income was afterwards increased to £400, old tenor, which was £53 6s. 8d. lawful money, or \$178 77, and was a more ample income, other things being equal, than most ministers receive now.

connection with the society in the call of their pastor. It was the almost universal practice of that day, as it ever should be, for the church themselves to choose their own pastor. They never should suffer a pastor to be imposed on them against their choice, by the society with whom they are connected. The society, it is true, have their right of choice, and should exercise it; and when the church and society, voting in distinct bodies, choose the same person, he should be established as their minister. This course of procedure in the choice of a pastor has been found the most adapted to promote harmony and mutual profit in our churches and societies, as they are connected in the support of the ministry.

Mr. Wales having served in the gospel ministry 34 years, died Feb. 23, 1765, in the 66th year of his age. He was blessed with talents which rendered him very amiable and entertaining in social life. In public prayer his performances were eminent, and on some occasions almost unequalled. In his preaching he was faithful, and exhibited the doctrines of the gospel in a plain and affecting manner. In his answer to the unanimous call of the people to settle among them, he says "I rejoice to see you thus united for the settlement of the gospel amongst you, and can do no less than with gratitude acknowledge the respect that you have shown to me in giving me the offer of settling with you; but as the work of the gospel ministry is hard and difficult, so I dare not rush myself into that office with precipitation, but have, as I hope, sincerely laid the case before God by prayer and earnestly sought direction from him;—further I have taken the advice of sundry of my fathers in the ministry;—and therefore looking upon the call to come from heaven, as well as from man, I dare not refuse it, but accept it—earnestly asking your prayers to God for me that I may so faithfully acquit myself in the office of a gospel minister, as to save my own soul and those whom God shall commit to my watch and care." It was with these devout sentiments that he entered on his responsible work. That wisdom, and direction which he sought from above were bestowed upon him; for his labors were not in vain. Prosperity attended him not only in his public ministry, but, in the education of his family, two particular blessings which are very likely to be enjoyed in connection by the faithful minister. His son the late Dr. Samuel Wales was professor of Divinity in Yale College. His daughter was the wife of his successor in the ministry in this place.

During Mr. Wales ministry the doctrines of the gospel were

but very little controverted in this country. Differences of religious opinions which now set altar against altar and temple against temple, had not then arisen. But this state of things was like a dead calm in the natural world, and like that gave opportunity for the gathering of principles and substances, quite incongenial with vigorous health. The people indeed, according to the most excellent practice of that age, remembered the sabbath day to keep it holy, and with great pains and punctuality attended public worship; yet there was arising in the churches a disposition to make religion consist too much in formality and outward observances.

It was under this mistaken view of religion that this church as did most churches in New England, early began to practice on what was called the half-way-covenant. This, as the term shows, was adopting half way measures, which in religion as in other things, are ever found to be worse than none. In the course of twenty two years, 35 persons were admitted to this church in this way; that is, by professing their belief in the doctrines of the gospel, and receiving baptism, though they did not profess to have experienced regeneration; and in consequence of this they were excused from partaking of the Lords Supper. They were also entitled to the privilege of offering their children in baptism. This practice began to be adopted in the churches of New England through the recommendation of a council composed of delegates from Connecticut and Massachusetts, which met in Boston in June 1657, and more especially by the recommendation of a Massachusetts council which assembled in 1662. The practice was slow in its beginning. It originated in part, in the unreasonable and strange rule early adopted by our fathers, that none should be admitted to the privilege of freemen or be eligible to office who were not church members. Many doubtless sought to be nominal church members for the sake of the honors and privileges it conferred. But though this practice at first was adopted with difficulty, it was with as much difficulty laid aside, when it had prevailed for an hundred years, and was found to be unscriptural, and to have a tendency to destroy the very existence of the churches.—It began to be laid aside in this church in 1760, and the scriptural rule of the Puritans was restored; that they only be received as members of the church, who give credible evidence of piety, or regeneration.

During Rev. Mr. Wales' ministry, 350 infants and adult persons were baptized in this church, and 126 persons were admitted to full communion. Professing christians who had fam-

ilies, almost universally practiced family prayer; instructed their children in the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and taught them the obligations of the sabbath and of public worship.

It was therefore in the belief and practice, and under the preaching of evangelical doctrines, that this church was gathered, and nurtured; the same religious doctrines and truths which gave origin to the civil institutions, the religious freedom, the republican government, and eventually the independence of our country. The constitution and best laws of our Commonwealth were framed by men educated in these peculiar sentiments.— They were true sons of the Puritans, respecting whom the historian Hume declares, though an enemy to them, that they were the only people in England who possessed the true principles of liberty.

The influence of those divine truths in which this church was established was not transient. In about two years after the death of Mr Wales, July 29, 1766, the church chose Mr. Peres Fobes as their pastor. On the 18th of August following, the town concurred in this call, and voted him his stated salary.* He graduated at Cambridge College 1762, and was ordained over this church and society Nov. 19, 1766. (E) In speaking of him some who hear me will be able from their own remembrance to bear witness to his virtues. But as it is 19 years the 23d of last February since his decease, a great part of this audience probably never saw him, so rapidly do the generations of man arise and pass away.

Though of feeble health, he was exceedingly diligent in the acquisition of knowledge. As he had a peculiar taste for scientific pursuits, he greatly excelled in deducing facts from the natural world to illustrate moral and religious truth, thus evincing that the God of revelation is the God of nature. His was the happy talent of communicating the fruits of his literary researches and acquirements in a familiar manner and without any parade of learning.

During the revolution such was his patriotic spirit, that notwithstanding his natural feebleness of constitution, he volunteered as a chaplain in the American army. In 1786, he officiated as President in Brown University, during the absence of President Manning. The next year he was chosen Professor of experimental philosophy in that Institution. He rendered very important services to the University,—was chosen to its fellowship in 1787, and received the degree of Doctor of Laws

His salary at first was £78,—\$260, which was increased afterwards as the price of labor and provisions increased.

in 1792. The advancement of education employed much of his time and efforts. It has been said, and I doubt not but truly, "that the schools in this town under his patronage and inspection, were for many years an example for the country, and bear an honorable testimony to the public of the vast importance of a learned clergy to our country." He instructed a large number of youth in their preparatory studies for college, and many candidates for the ministry pursued, under his inspection and at his house, the study of Theology.

But Dr. Fobes, as many now living can testify, excelled as a preacher. He often preached unwritten sermons, but they were not unstudied or unmethodical. His biographer says of him, that "Founded on Christ and his Apostles, so happily did he blend in his creed the excellences of Calvin and Arminius, that he seemed a friend to both: though an acute metaphysician and theologian, yet knowing the gospel designed for all, plain and practical discourses were his chief aim."

In the course of his ministry, he published several sermons. One was an address to young persons on the importance of early piety. One was on the subject of the Divine and human agency being united in effecting the sinner's salvation. One was preached at Taunton at the execution of John Dixon who was the only white person ever executed in this county. Another was a Funeral Sermon at the death of Dr. Manning. He published a sermon also on the wise appointment and happy consequences of death to the righteous; and another preached at Marshfield at the ordination of his son-in-law, Rev. Elijah Leonard, in which he shows what are the principal doctrines which a minister should preach. He there says, (page 13.) that, "the Divinity of Christ, the Deity of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Trinity and of human depravity, are doctrines so evidently taught in the scriptures, that the christian minister will not fail to teach them." Hence he says, page 15th, "we can understand the nature and necessity of the atonement, the necessity of regeneration, of justification by Christ, sanctification by the Spirit, and salvation by grace." Some have insinuated that these were not his leading sentiments in the last years of his life, but that there was a change in his views of religious doctrines. I have conversed with a number who were among his constant and most attentive hearers, and their testimony is, that the doctrines in the sermon above referred to, were among the principal themes of his preaching while he lived. He preached several other ordination sermons which were published. He

published a scriptural catechism after the manner of one by Dr. Watts, in which the answers were mostly in the language of scripture. It had been his practice, as Sabbath shools were not then instituted, to instruct the children from the Westminster Assembly's catechism, which received his recommendation with that of many other eminent divines.

Such was his ministry and such his sentiments. And as he was deservedly beloved by the people to whom he ministered, it is easy to infer what were their sentiments also. It cannot be doubted that the religious sentiments of this church, as a body, have ever been in agreement with the prevailing sentiments of the New-England churches.

"Feb. 24, 1767. The church met and voted to receive the Cambridge Platform as their standard and rule of church government, except the articles of Ruling Elders, Teacher separate from a pastor and lay ordination, and not to reject these absolutely as unscriptural, but only suspend our assent to them till we better see their divine authority." This platform of church government was drawn up by a synod or council of ministers and delegates of the churches assembled in Cambridge in 1648. They designed it as a supplement to the Assembly's Catechism, as may be inferred from several passages in the preface,—“having perused the public confession of faith agreed upon by the reverend assembly of divines at Westminster, and finding the sum and substance thereof in matters of doctrines to express not their own judgment only, but ours also;”—they then except some sections in that confession respecting church discipline, and add, “touching which we refer ourselves to the draught of the church discipline in the ensuing treatise.” This treatise or platform was approved in substance by a synod which assembled in Boston in 1679 and recommended to the churches. They express their desire “that the churches may continue steadfast in the order of the gospel according to what is therein declared from the word of God.” This platform of church government is still, in substance, approved as the standing rule in the Congregational churches. It was designed to promote their purity, fellowship and liberty. This church, doubtless, received it from these same motives—that as they had received Christ Jesus the Lord, they might so walk in him; be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine; and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

Those were times when controversy slumbered, —when Con-

gregational ministers in this country, were agreed in the chief doctrines of the gospel, "saw eye to eye," had little false christianity to contend against, and spent their time and strength in promoting the truth.

By divine permission this history will be resumed and concluded in the afternoon.

SERMON 2.

PSALM 125: 2.

AS THE MOUNTAINS ARE ROUND ABOUT JERUSALEM SO THE LORD IS
ROUND ABOUT HIS PEOPLE FROM HENCEFORTH, EVEN FOREVER.

I HAVE thought this passage particularly applicable to the later history of this church, and the friends of truth in this town. "Had not the Lord been on our side,"—had not his arms been around his people, "they would have been swallowed up quick, —the proud waters would have gone over our soil." May we ever trust in him who is round about his people forevermore.

Dr. Fobes' ministry, as we have seen was prosperous. It was 45 years; in which time 136 persons were admitted to the communion of this church, and 304 infants and adults were baptized.

The first meeting-house was conveniently situated for the first inhabitants, and continued as the place of worship for more than 42 years. On the 3d of November 1773, this house in which we are now assembled, began to be used for public worship. When first built, it had no bellfrey, or steeple, and the body of it contained square pews, after the ancient fashion. It was erected and finished by Mr. Israel Washburn, at his own cost, and sold to those who purchased pews in it; and the old meeting-house which stood three-fourths of a mile south-west from this, was given to him by the town. Much opposition arose to the plan and proposals which he made to the town for erecting this house: 34 voted for accepting them and 27 against it. Those opposed to building a new meeting house, living mostly in the southern part of the town, undertook to repair the old one. In this undertaking about one third of the church took an active part. Upon which the other two thirds, living mostly in the northern part of the town, entered a complaint against

them for their illegal and unchristian conduct. Neighboring ministers, Rev. Mr. Toby and Rev. M. Conant were resorted to for counsel and advice. These ministers met the church and after prayer to God for direction, and after hearing a long representation of existing difficulties on each side, they advised the brethren of the north part of the town, to pass over the offence which they supposed they had received from the brethren of the south part, who had been concerned in repairing the old meeting house and to forgive them, and accordingly it was done. At length general unanimity and harmony were restored, by considering, doubtless, that the general good is the object to be pursued by every individual.

The land on which this house stands and the common connected with it, was purchased or obtained of Mr. Amariah Hall.

Dr. Fobes describes the people of this town, forty years ago, as being generally noted for industry, virtue and patriotism.—“The inhabitants, he says, especially those who attend public worship here, have been distinguished for their zealous attachment to learning, to military discipline and church music. The unanimity and order of their public decision during the late war, their cautious, but spirited exertions, their prompt and peaceable compliances with the numerous calls of government in the days of exigence and danger, are well known:—and perhaps ought the rather to be remembered as their patience long endured the trial of cruel opposition, and the shocks of ridicule, from the tongues and pens of great numbers around them.—Fired at the name of insurgency, and hearing that a conspiracy was formed to prevent the sitting of the October Court of 1786, the troops of this little town consisting of two small companies roused unanimous, and at the call of their leaders, mustered in arms, marched alone to Taunton, entered the Court-house as a pre-occupant guard; there lay upon their arms through the whole night preceding the day of the Court’s sitting; and in open defiance of all the bloody threats of an unprincipled mob, in constant expectation of hundreds in arms ready for battle, they stood firm but alone, until the next day about noon, when by a re-inforcement of troops from the county of Plymouth and a number gleaned from different parts of the country, they formed and under command of General Cobb, the insurrection was crushed, the Supreme Court sat, and government was triumphant. But from the whole county of Bristol not another whole company appeared, except the two from Raynham.”*

* Collections of the Historical Society, Vol 8—1793.

These accounts, given by one perfectly acquainted with their correctness show us the character of the times ;—that the love of freedom of order and justice, which warmed the breasts of revolutionary patriots, was not easily quenched. Taking sides with religion and conscience, it held on its way ; and it devolves on us in our turn to transmit the same spirit to those who shall come after us. Many states having made a noble beginning in executing measures to obtain civil and religious freedom, have through a want of prudence or wisdom lost, the treasure, just as it was within their reach. But our patriotic fathers had wisdom and virtue, which taught them not only to achieve, but rightly to improve a victory over their oppressors. They were careful not to destroy the precious grain in gathering it in. What avails all the toil of acquiring property or learning liberty, if we have no discretion in using them ?

In April, 1753, Dr. Watts Psalms and Hymns began to be used by this church and Society in their public worship. *

It is stated by Dr. Fobes that, in 1793 about one sixth of the inhabitant of this town were Baptists : that the number of families was near two hundred, and that by the census, the town contained about a thousand souls. The Baptists at that period were frequently opposed in withdrawing their support from the established societies, and were sometimes compelled by law, though unjustly, in my view, to render to them their proportional support. But the Rev. Mr Bachus, in his history, gives an account of but one person in this town who was compelled to pay a tax against her will, to the support of the ministry. In 1783 the town passed a vote not to distress those who, on the ground of their being Baptists, had declined paying their ministerial tax ;—they gave this reason for the measure, that to compel them to pay it, “ would endanger that peace and harmony which ever ought to subsist in a town society.” (F) It appears that religious freedom was here at an early period uniformly allowed and enjoyed.

Seventy years ago, repeated instances occurred of persons who withdrew from this church and became what were then called “ separatists,” but most of them after a few year’s consideration, returned, confessed their error, and were restored.

After the decease of Dr. Fobes, this church was destitute of a pastor about seven months, till Rev. Stephen Hull, formerly

* At first they were used but once a day, Mr. Dunster’s being used the remainder of the time. In 1764; Dr. Watt’s were used exclusively.

of Amesbury but now of Carlile, was installed here Sept 9. 1812. He continued minister of this society till about the first of May 1823, when at his own request, he was dismissed. During his ministry which was nearly eleven years fifty two persons were received into the church. There was in this society an extraordinary season of revival, as most of you well remember, in 1820, which year about 40, mostly middle aged persons, publicly professed their faith in Christ, gave an account of their religious experience in writing in this house, and were received by the church.

My ordination took place October 2, 1823. From that time to the present, seventy-seven persons have been received to the communion of this church, and, perhaps half that number of infants and adults have received baptism.

The Sabbath School was instituted in this society in June 1823, and has increased from 50 to 130 scholars.

At the time of my settlement you are aware, there had been for several years an inclination in some of this church and society to embrace sentiments different from those in which this church was founded, and which it had embraced and maintained for more than three fourths of a century. Opposition soon arose, which in April 1828 resulted in the withdrawal of 25 members from the church, and in the formation of the new church and society in this town.

A meeting of this society had been called on the 20th of August 1827, to see if the society will request their pastor to exchange with those ministers in this vicinity, with whom he has declined exchanges—and after mature deliberation it was voted by about two thirds of the members present,—That it be left discretionary with the pastor of this society to exchange with such ministers as he may think proper.

That God has shown his approval, my brethren, of your going forward as you have gone in the belief and support of the doctrines on which this church was founded, is fully evident to my mind, from his merciful visitations to us the past season. You have experienced the days of the right hand of the Most High. In the course of five months past forty four have embraced the covenant of God, and united in your communion; and about a dozen more have in the same time expressed a hope in the all-sufficient Saviour. The marked and solemn attention given to the truths when preached; the diligence shown in attending public worship; the anxiousness expressed by members respecting the eternal interest of their souls; the fervent charity, perfect union, and increased spirit of prayer, which have been appar-

ent among the members of the church; all evince the divine work of God's spirit.

The number of members in this church now is 120,—a greater number than it ever contained at any one time before. Fourteen persons in all have sustained the office of deacon in this church. The first were John Staples and Samuel Leonard, who were among the original members of the church. Jonathan Shaw, was chosen deacon in 1741. Jonathan Shaw a son of the former, was chosen in 1780. Jonathan Hall and Edmund Williams in 1750. Elijah Leonard in 1761. Israel Washburn, in——. Abiel Williams, and Oliver Washburn in 1797. Lloyd Shaw in 1819. Horatio Leonard in 1824, and Eliab B. Dean and Elijah Gushee, jr. the present deacons, in 1828. Edmund Williams withdrew from the church, and united with the Baptists.

From the history which has now passed in review, I remark, in the first place.

1. That christian discipline appears to have been maintained in this church, from its commencement. It was evidently the object of its early members to live in the observance of all the ordinances and commands of Christ. They certainly possessed great fortitude and moral courage in declaring and supporting what they believed to be the doctrines of the gospel. They were fearless in the discharge of their duty. Possessing the general character of the age, they did not for slight reasons, as many do now, omit to assemble on the Sabbath where God's name is recorded. Who, in coming to the close of life, and in going to give an account of all his time, ever regretted that he had spent a part of one day in seven, in attending at the house of God, "to behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in his temple?" On the other hand, what confidence can they have of God's mercy who uniformly slight this privilege? What hope can they have of enjoying, or knowing how to engage in his worship, the moment they die, if all their life time, they have never loved, or practised it?

One striking feature in the former character of this church, is the particular watch and care which they exercised over their children. On the records appears, in substance, the following notice: Aug. 2, 1749, at a public meeting of the church, it was proposed by the pastor, that since meetings for singing and dancing have become so common among the youth in this place, and there were some of the church concerned in them, whether it was not the duty of this church to use their influence as far as it would extend, for the suppression of them; and the church were of the mind that it was their duty. Forty years after

wards is the following record : The church met and after prayer to God and mature deliberation, they unanimously agreed, that it was the duty of churches to exercise and extend a particular care and watch over all baptised persons ;—and resolved, that we of this church in particular, will in future consider this to be our duty, in regard to all baptised members.

It seems to have been impressed on their minds, as it ever should be on the churches, that they as well as the pastor, ought to be well acquainted with the moral character and sentiments of every one in their particular communion ; and to educate their children for Christ and his church. They did more than is usually done now in restraining them from vicious company, and in exhibiting to them the important and salutary example of family worship. They brought them often and at an early age to the sanctuary. As habits are lasting, when formed, if we would have our children embrace the truth, and love the sabbath and the public worship of God, we must early bring our children within their influence.

2. We may see what has been the practice of this church in the admission of members. The indispensable qualification for admission to the Lord's table, has been a credible profession of experimental piety. Candidates in being received into this church, as far as my practice has extended, acknowledge their belief in the scriptures, as given by inspiration of God ;—that there is one God existing in Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to whom they consecrate themselves ;—that their hearts before being sanctified by the spirit of God were of choice destitute of holiness ;—that they hope for salvation through Christ's atonement, engage to submit to the discipline of this church, and to live a holy and virtuous life in view of the retributions of eternity.

Persons desirous of the fellowship of this church, have usually been conversed with repeatedly by the pastor, and when he has obtained satisfaction of their qualification, he has propounded them to the church, usually a fortnight, before their admission. The candidates have generally given in, either in writing or verbally, an account of their religious experience and hope in Christ. It was formerly the case, and has, as you are aware, been practised more of late, to have the written relation read in public. By this course, it has been found that sufficient opportunity has been given for all to become acquainted with the moral and religious character of the candidate.

3. It is manifest that the religious doctrines embraced in this church now, are substantially the same which it embraced a hundred years ago. But we have been represented as exclusion-

ists, and blamed for discontinuing ministerial exchanges with some of the neighboring pastors. But why should we be blamed for practicing according to our conscientious belief, and refusing to renounce what we conceive to be the true doctrines of the gospel, and which the great majority of this church have ever received? Why should we not be left to the same liberty which we grant to others?

We deeply regret that we were obliged to discontinue ministerial exchanges with some of the neighboring pastors. But the cause of this discontinuance was in themselves. They had inbibed and are teaching a system of doctrines which neither we nor our fathers could find in the scriptures. As they have essentially departed from our conscientious belief, why should we be blamed for not seeing our way clear to follow them. We have not altered from our former belief, but it is they who have dissented from us. But we condemn them not. You have never heard from me in this sacred place or any other, the language of denunciation. Nor, I trust, will you ever hear from me such language.

The step therefore which your pastor deliberately, from conscientious motives, and with the approbation of more than two thirds of this church and society, adopted in 1826, of discontinuing the exchanges which I have mentioned, was adopted as an important duty. Without adopting this step we fully believed that this church would have been drawn away from "the good old paths" in which our fathers walked; that it would gradually and inevitably have fallen into a state of skepticism and unbelief, as to what we consider the leading truths of the gospel, and that we should have occasioned in a great measure the withdrawalment of the presence of God and the spirit of revivals.

I do not mean to imply that we or our denomination alone, have the truth, or are infallably right. It is suitable that we should hear the admonition, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast;" and this also, "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."

4. I may suggest from this history, what is the duty of churches in the call and settlement of their ministers. It is their right, from the authority of the scriptures, and according to the general usage in New England, to choose their own pastor. It is the duty of every church in selecting a pastor, to require of him a fair statement of his doctrinal belief. They should ascertain whether he possesses the spirit of Christ, and what are his views of religion which he designs to present in his preaching. By requiring him to be thus explicit, they may avoid much disap-

pointment, and self reproach; and derive far greater profit from his ministry. He, if possessed of the spirit of the gospel, will be ready to give a reason of his faith as well as of his hope, in christian meekness to any one who may desire it; and the council who ordains him, in being faithful to their trust, will not hasten to lay hands on him before satisfying themselves on these points.

Be faithful, beloved brethren, in these things whenever divine Providence shall call you to select one who shall minister to you in word and in doctrine. It is a duty which you owe to your divine Master who has called you to act in his name. It is a duty which you owe to yourselves, for can it ever be a matter of indifference whether truth or error is preached to you? If you would employ able and faithful men to defend your temporal interests when they are in danger, much more should you be anxious not to entrust the guidance of your souls to men who have not the truth. To select as your teachers holy men who declare the truth, is a duty which you owe also to your children, for they will be influenced by your example in spiritual as well as in temporal things.

5. How happy is a church who are united in the one Lord and one faith; among whom there are no divisions—no root of bitterness, but are at peace, and have fervent charity among themselves. Such at present appears to be the state of this church. Let us remember the new commandment of Christ to love one another; and let this brotherly love continue. By trampling on this command churches have sometimes become infected with pride, envy and jealousy, divided into parties, and resorted to numerous councils for the healing of their difficulties. But they are never healed till a spirit of mutual forgiveness and brotherly love, is revived. Let the most excellent and divine direction of Christ, Matt. 18: 15, be observed respecting an offending brother, and difficulties would rarely exist in any church.

6. In view of the kind dealings of God with this church and people during the century now closed, we should feel special cause for gratitude. He hath wrought great things for us. But while we are congratulating ourselves on our high advantages, let us consider whether we are uniformly acting as becomes the descendants of those holy men who once sojourned in this place, walked the streets which we walk, worshipped where we worship, but have long since entered into their rest? If we do not follow up with zeal the holy work which they nobly begun, and left for us to pursue, how shall we be prepared to meet them at the final day?—how shall we be worthy to share in their eternal rewards? They have toiled, and we have entered into

their labors. They have left us as their best legacy, the example of their integrity, and patience, and fortitude. Their graves are among us, but their praise in the churches, is their memorial that shall never die.

How solemn a thing to live where God has thus long been carrying forward such a work of grace ! How alarming to live impenitent where such displays of truth and mercy have been making, evinces no ordinary measure of guilt. And he who goes impenitent and unsanctified to eternity from this place, where Jesus Christ has been set forth in all his divine excellence—where such numbers have felt his love and witnessed for him, must in the retrospect be filled with all the bitterness of remorse. He will doubtless forever bemoan the day of his birth and say, “Let that day be darkness ; let not God regard it from above, let a cloud dwell upon it, and the darkness of night terrify it.” O ye neglectors of the Gospel, who now live where you are invited to enter Christ’s kingdom, no longer refuse the invitation.

Entreat, brethren of this church and congregation, that those doctrines and that ministry which five successive generations, without much interruption, have operated here in preparing sinners for heaven, may continue to operate ;—that this place which is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven, and has proved so to multitudes, may yet prove to be such to multitudes more.

Surely we may take encouragement from the deliverances which God has wrought for us. He has preserved this church as a body in the enjoyment of its primitive doctrines and order, while some other churches around us have fallen from the faith of their fathers. Here the divine Spirit which Christ promised as the Comforter, hath descended from time to time, and of late more copiously than formerly. May we not believe that this Spirit shall continue to descend as generations shall successively arise ; that when this house shall have gone to decay, there shall be those here who shall rebuild the waste places. What would have become of this church, in times past, and what will become of it in future, without the visitations of God’s Spirit ?—“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.” To him, then, should we look for the support of the interests of his kingdom among us.

Time, in its rapid flight, is hurrying us away. Not one of this congregation will be living when another century shall have expired. O how soon will our work on earth be finished, and our eternal destiny fixed. What is that destiny for which we are preparing, and for what object are we living ?

Let me charge you, my beloved friends, as I charge myself, to be faithful in the awfully responsible work entrusted to us, for we are set for the defence of the gospel. Let us see that we handle it not deceitfully or carelessly. Be clothed with humility. Take the Saviour as your invariable pattern. Ask how he would have spoken and felt and acted in your circumstances, and when you see the course which he would have pursued, make that course your own.

NOTE A. Page 3.

WHAT is meant by Old and New Style requires some explanation. By the Old Style, the year began the 25th of March, which was hence called the first month, April the second, and so on. By the New Style, the year is made to begin the first of January. It also corrects the mode of reckoning which formerly made the year too long by 11 min. and 14 1-2 sec. which amounted, in 130 years, to a whole day. In 1582, when the New Style was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII, the time as computed had advanced ten days beyond the true time. The New Style was not adopted in England or this country, till 1752, when the difference between the Old and New Style had increased to about eleven days. All civilized nations use the New Style except the Russians. The rule for reducing Old Style to New, is this: If the date according to the Old Style, is in the present century, carry it forward twelve days; if in the last or eighteenth century, carry it forward eleven days, if in the century before, ten days, &c.

NOTE B. Page 5.

October 21, 1652, the following record was entered on the town books of Taunton:—"It was agreed and granted by the town to the said Henry Leonard and James Leonard his brother, and Ralph Russel, free consent to come hither, and join with certain of our inhabitants to set up a bloomery work on the Two Mile River."—"It was agreed and granted by a free vote of the town, that such particular inhabitants as shall concur together with the said persons in their design, shall have free liberty from the town so to do, to build and set up this work, and that they shall have the woods on the other side of the Two Mile River wheresoever it is common on that side of the river, to cut for their cord-wood, to make coals, and also to dig and take mine or ore, at Two Mile Meadow, or in any of the commons appertaining to the town where it is not now in propriety."

According to this vote and the encouragement received, the persons above mentioned established the "bloomery," and the manufacture of iron from the native ore was extensively carried on. At that time beds of iron ore were far more abundant in this town than at present. The decrease is owing probably to the levelling of the forests and draining the meadows. These iron works, then called a "bloomery," have been enlarged by the addition of a rolling mill and anchor shop. They were owned by the descendants of James Leonard, more than a hundred years. Henry Leonard tempted by the advantages particularly of ore which New Jersey afforded, removed there and erected the first iron works in that province.

NOTE C. Page 6.

Philip's having given orders that Taunton and Bridgewater should be spared till all the other towns in the colony were destroyed, and thus saving many precious lives, shows that, though a savage, there was in his heart a place for kindness and gratitude. His summer residence in Raynham was the rising grounds east of the Fowling Pond. While here, he had frequent intercourse with the Leonard's, who repaired his guns, supplied him with beef, iron, and with such tools as are most prized by savages. This induced him to charge his Indians never to

injure a Leonard.—A very noticeable fact in savage history, and shows us how great a reward we may often receive by a few humane and kind attentions which cost us nothing.

NOTE D. Page 6.

The inhabitants of Taunton, Bridgewater and Rehoboth, were strongly urged to forsake their dwellings and to remove to Barnstable, Sandwich, Yarmouth and Eastham, on the sea-side, where they might be in greater security, from the dangers of this direful war. But they declined accepting the friendly invitation, preferred remaining at their own dwellings, and courageously meeting all the dangers which threatened. The town of Taunton, by their committee, replied to the invitation thus: "We bless God that he hath given us much room in your hearts, that you so freely tender to us a part with you in your houses, fields and provisions, at such a time when the Lord is threatening us with the bereavement of our own. It much comforteth us in this day of darkness and distress—we shall want no succour you are able to afford us. We, therefore, return you all serious thanks, for your sincere and abundant love, beseeching the Lord to continue and increase your peace and ability and promptness to relieve distress in this evil day. Nevertheless upon our serious and mature deliberation upon, and consideration of your great offer, we cannot at present comply with a motion to remove, and quit our places, and leave our habitations to be a desolation, and that because we fear, we should in so doing be wanting to the name of God, and the interest of Christ in this place, and betray much diffidence and cowardice, and give the adversary occasion to triumph over us to the reproach of that great and fearful name of God which is called upon us." This answer was signed among others, by Richard Williams and Walter Dean, from whom the numerous families of these names in this region, have doubtless descended.

NOTE E. Page 10.

The churches and pastors invited to assist in his ordination, were the six following: The church in West Bridgewater, Rev. Mr. Perkins pastor; the church in Bridgewater, Rev. Mr. Shaw; 1st church in Middleborough, Rev. Mr. Conant; church in Berkley, Rev. Mr. Toby; church in North Middleborough, Rev. Mr. Reed; and the 3d church in Middleborough, Rev. Mr. Turner pastor. The committee chosen by the church to write, sign and send letters missive to said churches, were, Dea. Jonathan Hall, Mr. Israel Washburn and Mr. Joseph Shaw.

NOTE F. Page 16.

The method long pursued of supporting the Congregational ministry by taxation, has occasioned many difficulties, and greatly retarded the spread of pure christianity. This law has been modified and evaded till it has grown obsolete, and hence ought to be repealed. It is sufficient for the Legislature to protect religion without prescribing the measures by which it shall be supported. All attempts to enforce the law for the ministerial tax when it has been resisted, have been exceedingly injurious to the very object for which the law was professedly made.

It has been found by experiment, that the churches need no such dependence on the civil power. Religion will doubtless hold on its way by the virtue and faithfulness of its professors, the purity of its truths, its own divine efficacy, and the blessings of its Author. The third article in our Bill of Rights, it is hoped, will soon be laid aside. Then our societies of all denominations will be left to support their respective preaching and worship in their own way, and will be voluntary associations. All would be protected in the exercise of their corporate powers and rights, and in the forms and usages of the several denominations with which they are connected. No person would be compelled to belong to any religious society against his own consent. "My kingdom, saith Christ, is not of this world."





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